

“KIM.”

As a literary creation “Kim,” the Little Friend of all the World, stands between Mowgli and Stalky. He has much in common with Mowgli, and at times he distinctly resembles Stalky, but if he has not the charm of the one he has not the curiously repellant quality of the other; that touch of exaggeration and unreality which in Stalky aroused the ireful contempt of the average public school-boy. There were seven school-boys like Stalky and Co., yet in them each boy recognized, perhaps unconsciously, *something* akin to himself, which disturbed him and made him as uncomfortable as a puppy, who has, for the first time, caught sight of his reflection in the mirror.

Kim and the Indian Empire the book might well be called, for the small figure stands in the foreground of a vast shifting panorama of India from the Hills to the Sea; and the amazing adventures of Kim are interwoven with what Kipling calls the Great Game—*i.e.*, the Secret Service. “Well is the game called Great,” says Kim, “truly it runs like a shuttle through all Hind.” So runs Kim, gradually getting education “of best sorts,” as the Llama expressed it, from St. Xaviers—and other sources. And under the narrative there is ever a current of seriousness for those whom it may concern.

The people of England have but a small and very superficial knowledge of the Indian Empire. They know nothing of its inner workings. The Great Game may be, for all they know, a Solar Myth evolved by Kipling for their entertainment. But they are aware that Kipling can write of the people of the great, dusty, sun-smitten land, which claims so many English lads and makes or breaks them, with an intimate and comprehensive Knowledge possessed by no one else. He writes not as an alien, but as Kimbalt O'Hara might be supposed to write when he becomes a full member of the Secret Service. The Llama, Logan Sahib, the garrulous woman of Kulu, Mahubul Ali, who was, he said, “*eufi*” (a free thinker), but would have Kim go through many curious rites

at the hands of Huneefa before he trusts him upon the road—for “when one can get on the blind-sides of a woman, a stallion, or a devil, why go round to invite a kick?” And the jovial, fearful, Hurree Babu, who dreaded the magic he investigated, and collected folklore for the Royal Society with a lively belief in all the Powers of Darkness.

All these are living characters and not merely types, but the Llama towers above them. It is not often that Kipling draws a character of this sort. The old man's natural nobility of nature, his child-like faith and all-embracing charity lift him above the other characters in the book. He is, as Hurree observes, “totally devoid of all religiosity,” a blight which falls upon men of many religions. “To those who follow the Way,” says the Llama, “there is neither black nor white, Hind nor Bhotiyal. We be all souls seeking escape.” The story of his search for a River which shall free him from the Wheel of Life is bound up with the story of Kim's wanderings. It is he who had the greatest share in the making of Kim; teaching him things which were not taught at St. Xavier's, nor yet to be learnt upon the road, things which were foreign to the nature of the Friend of all the World, Reverence and Respect among others.

The Llama was a man who bred respect in those who knew him. Well might the verse which heads the last chapter form his epitaph:

“I'd not give way for an Emperor,
I'd hold my road for a King,
To the triple crown I'd not bow down,
But this is a different thing.
I'll not war with the powers of the air,
Sentries pass him through
Drawbridge let fall he is lord of us all,
The Dreamer whose dream came true!”

The charm of the book lies chiefly in the boyish gusto and joy with which Kim enters upon his adventures:—

“Kim sat up and yawned and shook himself and thrilled with delight. This was life as would have it—bustling, shouting, the buckling of belts, the beating of bullocks, and the creaking of wheels, the lighting of fires, and the cooking of food, new sights at every turn of the approving eye.” This is the keynote of the book, whether Kim is a small, and preternaturally acute gutter boy, seated on Zam-zammah, or the worn-out “chela” on his return from the hills. He

enjoys his life intensely, even those evil days spent in charge of the drummer-boy at Umballa, as he enjoys those curious meals collected in the Llama's begging bowl.

"It is a great and wonderful World, and I am Kim—Kim—Kim—one person alone in the middle of it," says Kim, gravely considering his own identity as we all have done at one time or another, and generally with a wonderful satisfaction which is almost equal to Kim's, although probably with less cause.

Some of the best pieces of description are to be found in the chapters which record the Llama's wanderings among the hills:—

"Above, still enormously above them, earth towered away towards the snow line where, from East to West across the hundreds of miles ruled as with a ruler, the last of the bold birches stopped. Above that, in scraps and blocks upheaved, the rocks strove to lift themselves above the white smother. Above these again, changeless since the world's beginning, but changing to every mood of the sun and cloud, lay the eternal snows. They could see the blots and blurs on its surface where storm and wandering wulli-wa got up to dance, below them, as they stood, the forest slid away on a sheet of blue green for mile upon mile; below the forest was a village they knew, though a thunder-storm worried and growled there for the moment. A pitch of twelve or fifteen hundred feet gave to the lake "where the streams gather who are the mothers of Sathey." It is as a journalist that Kipling describes nature, not as a poet. His method is picturesque and practical, he draws the picture with clear cut bold lines, it is neither romantic nor sublime. Were he to pursue the same course with his characters he might produce accurate photographs but not living men and women; for the poet, and every novelist is in his way a poet, must add something to life—some indefinable quality, before he can produce human-beings who shall live and move in his pages, and appeal to the human sympathies of his readers. Kipling possesses this quality in no small degree; each of his characters is endowed with a portion of it, and it is always a pleasure to come across an old friend in a new position. The Woman of Shamhegh, she of the turquoise headgear, we once knew as Elizabeth of the Mission. Now she possesses several husbands and a memory. The episode of her meeting with Kim

is one of the jewels that adorn Kim as a book, and they are many, scattered here and there as the narrative runs. When the Search is finished the story ends; the story of the man who would be freed from all Illusions, which is told to a people who deal largely in Illusions—of sorts. And we leave the Little Friend of all the World in a fair way of learning "Truth," although she wears many disguises—

"Truth, and God's own Common Sense!
Which is more than knowledge."

D. S. E.

PETER'S WINDOW.

IN the winter a window often becomes frosted over, and beautiful as fern patterns in ice may be they are apt to make the window decidedly dense, and outside the winter fog may be mistaken for mists of futurity! At this date last year we had hardly learnt to courageously babel our idiosyncracies "twencent," and the former things did not seem to have passed away. Now we are beginning to feel that a new era is upon us and around us. We have so long been accustomed to associate pageanty only with the great scenes in a Drury Lane Pantomime that to see it undisguised in our streets gives us quite a shock! Yet the huge State chariot with its gilded tritons and painted panels and its eight little cream horses are becoming quite a familiar spectacle. The idea of royalty, being disassociated at last from one individual to whom homage was at once a natural instinct and habit of a lifetime, has now to be reconsidered. Its constitutional importance seemed to us to be crystallized for all time, not so its functional. All the world seems to be waiting for June as schoolboys wait for a treat—not merely for the sake of processions or gaities, but as the recognition of new ends, and new means for their attainment; and with no small degree of curiosity as to what precisely those ends may be.

In the meantime the war is always with us, and with the New Year our National prophet has given us a "piece of his